

## VESTRIES, UNIONS AND BOARDS OF GUARDIANS

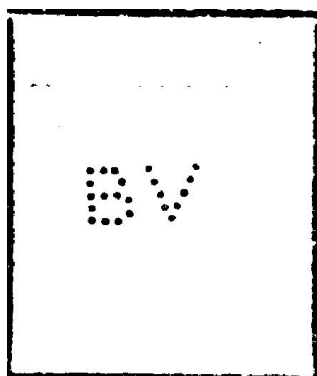
### **Dave Hill**

Before 1834 the parish itself was the normal unit of local government, administered by untrained officials who were local inhabitants and ratified by local magistrates, also untrained. Most important were the churchwardens who dealt with church and moral matters and overseers who dealt with roads and the poor.

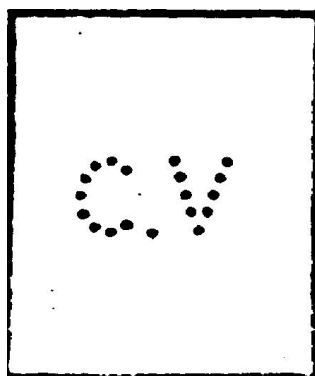
After 1834 these duties were taken from the parish and transferred to “Unions” of perhaps six parishes. A Board of Guardians composed of local gentry, clergy and major tradesmen governed these. Large towns, and some small ones were run by the Mayor and Burgesses, not parish elders. The Mayor and Burgesses were usually elected from amongst their own number, new Burgesses came from businessmen once they had “made good”. Though they called themselves “Vestries” they were not religious institutions and often not remotely Christian either!

This information comes from a McLaughlin Guide “Annals of the Poor” published by the Federation of Family History Societies.

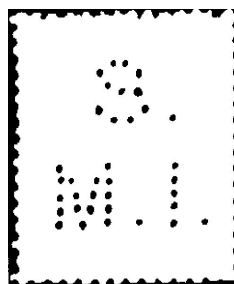
There are three confirmed instances of perfins used by a Vestry. B7410.01 BV The Vestry of St Mary Battersea circa 1899, C8115.01 C.V used by Camberwell Vestry circa 1890 and S5050.01 and S5050.02 S./M.I. used by St Mary Islington Vestry 1880-1900.



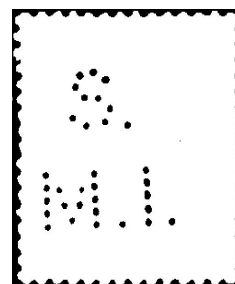
B7410.01  
c1899



C8115.01  
c1890

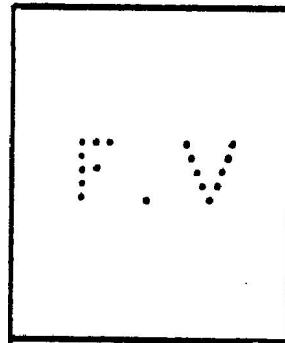


S5050.01  
1880-1900



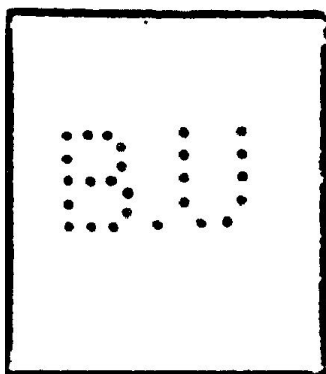
S5050.02  
1880-1895

Added to these is a provisional identity shown in the last Bulletin for F.V F4300.01, which is believed to have been used by the Fulham Vestry Office, Walham Green, London SW.

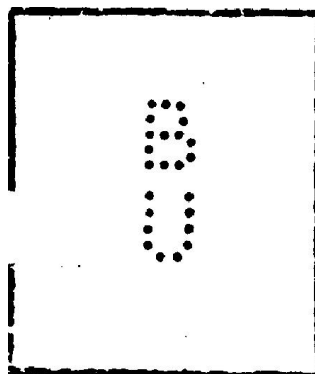


F4300.01  
1890-1900

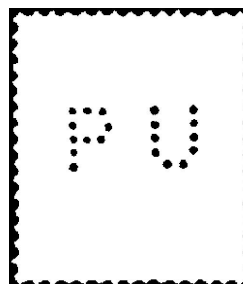
Five “Unions” are known or suspected to have been users of perfins. The Birmingham Union used B.U B7310.03 between 1920 and 1925, The Guardians of the Poor of the City and County of Bristol (the initials are presumed to stand for Bristol Union) used B/U B7320.01, Prescott Union used PU P4860.01 and P.U P4865.01, Ulverston Union used UU U2200.01 and the West Ham Union used WHU W3930.01M and W3930.02 used between 1905 and 1945.



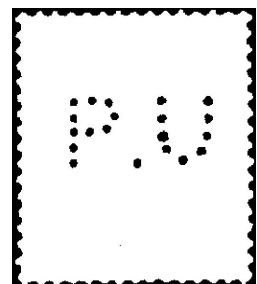
B7310.03  
1920-1925



B7320.01

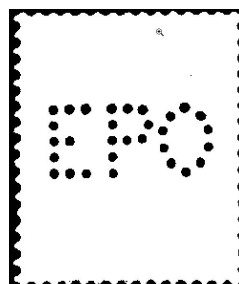


P4860.01  
1900-1924

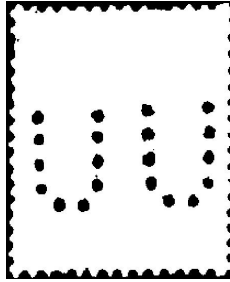
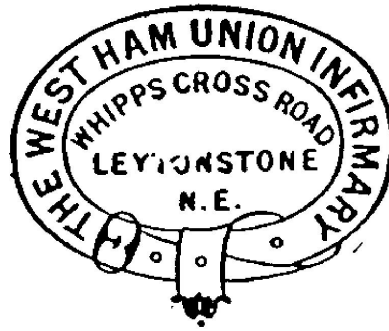


P4865.01  
1895-1900

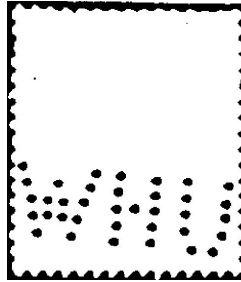
It is also worth mentioning that the West Derby Union has been recorded as using Everton Public Offices perfin EPO E3550.01 although they don't seem to have had a specific perfin.



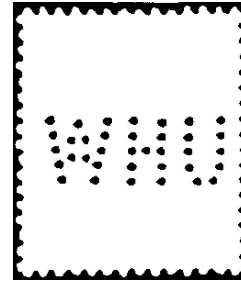
E3550.01  
c1911



U2000.01  
1890-1905

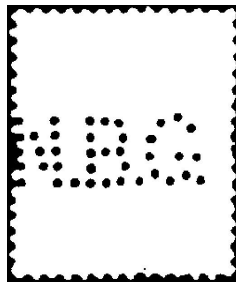


W3930.01M  
1912-1945



W3930.02  
1905-1910

There were two dies known used by Boards of Guardians, N0300.01 N.B.G. by Norwich (Norfolk) Board of Guardians 1903-7 and I0120.01 IBG thought to be used by Islington Board of Guardians 1905-1930 (which was in St Johns Road, Upper Holloway, perhaps they took over from St Mary, Islington 1880-1900 above).



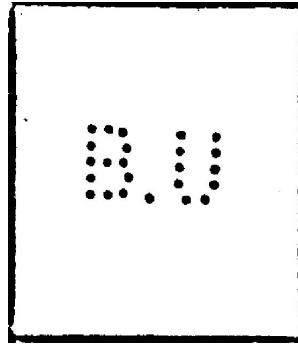
N0300.01  
1903-1907



I0120.01  
1905-1930

Poor Law Institutions (workhouses) and Infirmarys (hospitals) survived into the 1930's, there were 32 listed in London in 1926. Amongst them were Camberwell, Islington and West Ham.

I have also come across one other possibility, which may be linked to the Poor Law. This is a copy of B.U B7310.02 with a clear Bolton postmark dated 1904. I can't think what it stands for if it's not Bolton Union.



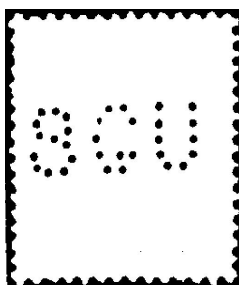
B7310.02  
c1904

In researching this article I have found three more possible dies linked to the Poor Law in the catalogue:

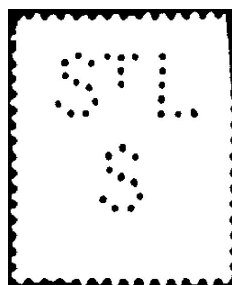
S3260.01 SGU is known used 1903-12 and postmarked London. In 1926 St Georges in the East district had no workhouse but a hospital in Old Gravel Lane E1. Have members postmarked copies that tie the area of use down?

S7450.01 StL/S is known used 1895-1900 postmarked London N. I had found there was a St Leonards, Shoreditch but could only find a small savings bank listed under that name in Kellys, but this little book of 1926 lists under Shoreditch district a workhouse at St Leonards House, London N1 and St Leonards Hospital, London N1. Both would be more likely users rather than the savings bank.

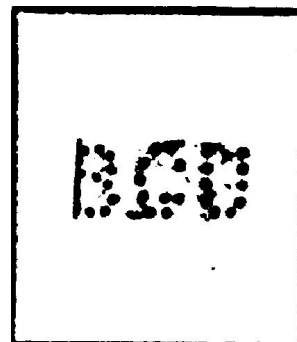
B3190.01 BGU I have no information on but could it be Bethnal Green with a workhouse and hospital in London E2?



S3260.01  
1903-1912



S7450.01  
1895-1900



B3190.01

If members have noticed anything similar I would be pleased to hear from them. There may be more, I started this article with just two perfin and found the rest whilst writing it.